

Lovett Tokens & Medals

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Robert Lovett, Sr. Biography

Robert Lovett, Sr.

By Katie (Jaeger) DeSilva

Robert Lovett was born on March 19, 1796 in a home on Cherry Street in Manhattan. Cherry Street was a then a pleasant neighborhood along the East River, a little north of the noise and congestion of the city thoroughfares, in the area now covered by the western end of the Brooklyn Bridge. The houses had spacious lawns on gently rolling ground.

Parents

An account of the affairs of John Lovett and Jane Johnson illustrates the world view of Robert’s family as they emigrated to New York from London in the 1790s.

John Lovett was born on April 3, 1756 to William and Elizabeth Lovett and was baptized at the Anglican Parish of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, St. George of Hanover Square, London. Nothing is known of his early life, but for several years prior to 1790, he worked as a farmer in Denbighshire, Wales. Though John and Jane Johnson, a Welsh woman born in 1760 , had their first four children out of wedlock, they formalized their union upon moving to London in 1789. The marriage is recorded in Volume XVI of the above-metioned parish register.

Upon arrival in London, John opened a hairdresser’s shop at No. 4 Shepherd’s Market, Mayfair and lived upstairs with his family. He became active in the London Corresponding Society (LCS), a group founded by shoemaker Thomas Hardy that met regularly to discuss politics and individual political rights. In 1793, Lovett published a 44-page political tract called *Citizen of the World*, in which he claimed the aristocracy was to blame for his failure at farming: “What a pity it is that so many industrious people should be drawn from being useful members of society, and that to support mistaken pride. I [myself] have been led from the country, where I was employed in cultivation and raising the necessities of life, and nothing would give me more satisfaction than to return to it, provided I could by that means earn a comfortable living; but, alas! Who that knows the oppressions the peasant labors under, would return to it, to live in a starving condition?

Lovett felt that the political system of concentrating power in a monarchy, supported by an aristocracy, was oppressive to the common classes and caused both the American and the French revolutions. He railed against the aristocratic ruling class, complained about high taxation, complimented the French revolutionaries, and noted his admiration for the American elective system of government. He believed that ordinary citizens, with their appreciation for practical necessity, would do a much better job of ruling and spending taxes than the aristocracy, who only knew how to indulge themselves.

The other members of the LCS, which Lovett formally joined on August 8, 1793, were artisans as well: engravers, silversmiths, clockmakers, printers, merchants and tradesmen of all sorts. They met in the taverns, homes and shops of members, and John Lovett’s shop door was one

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place they went to find posted the society's bills and notices. By the spring of 1794, the society's general meetings had to be held outdoors to accommodate as many as 2500 attendees. Most members had no formal education beside what they were able to acquire from reading the books in the possession of their own families as children: in many cases, only the Bible. Yet they were "men of decided character: sober, thinking men not likely to be easily put from their purpose."

They advocated Parliamentary reform geared to fairly represent the interests of all citizens. They called themselves "The Friends of Liberty" and addressed each other as "Citizen". They devoured the works of Thomas Paine, printing and distributing thousands of copies of *The Rights of Man*, as well as William Godwin's *Enquiry Into Political Justice*, while producing plenty of pamphlets of their own.

King George III's cabinet of advisors, the Royal Privy Council, feared the LCS and its sister societies in Scotland were preparing a revolution against the British crown. Incendiary statements made at a large, boisterous LCS general meeting of April 14, 1794, which John Lovett chaired, resulted in his arrest and imprisonment in the Tower of London, along with twelve others destined to become the defendants in the historic Treason Trials of 1794.

Under interrogation by the Privy Council, Lovett took a stubborn stance, making no statements that weren't already contained in the meeting's published resolutions. He said that he'd chaired the Chalk Farm meeting only because it was his turn to do so; that his name was on the resolutions, "not with his particular permission, but he had no objections to its being put." Lovett told the Council that the LCS would continue to meet in spite of the arrests, "as men doing no wrong."

During Lovett's six-month stay in the Tower, the LCS made collections in support of his wife and children. Privy Council Registers state that Mrs. Lovett "requested that the time she is permitted to be with her husband in the Tower is hardly sufficient for resting herself after so long and fatiguing a walk." The Council gave permission for Jane to remain with her husband as long as necessary. In July, the Council granted Lovett's brother George permission to visit him in his cell. John directed an invitation to the Man in the Moon pub, Cable and Goswell Streets, saying "You have no occasion to be under any apprehension of a disappointment, as I am constantly at home and ready to receive all visitors."

Arrests and interrogations continued throughout the summer of 1794. The crown seized various LCS members, held them temporarily, and then released them during this period. Finally, in October, a grand jury brought indictments for high treason against twelve society leaders. John Lovett was not among them: on October 10, the Privy Council had issued an order for his conditional release. The condition was: that he would leave England as soon as possible.

Thomas Hardy's trial at the Old Bailey commenced a few days later. The city of London came to a standstill as British subjects of all classes hung on reports of its progress. Hardy and the next two of the twelve defendants were acquitted. Afterward, charges against the reformers awaiting trial were dropped and all the captives were released from the Tower.

The Treason Trials of 1794 were an important step in deciding issues of individual liberty in the British Isles. Though Parliamentary reform was not accomplished until the 1830s, the acquittals directed a bright light on issues of free speech and public assembly within the Kingdom. In his autobiography, prominent LCS member Francis Place stated that Hardy, Lovett and their fellows had ushered in a new era for the working class. He said membership in the LCS "induced men to read books...to respect themselves, and to desire to educate their children...The discussions in the divisions...and in the small debating meetings, opened to them views which they had never before taken. They were compelled by these discussions to find reasons for their opinions, and tolerate others...It is more than probable that a circumstance like this never before occurred."

It is clear that for John Lovett, these values stayed with him for the rest of his life, and carried on to future generations of his family. Early in 1795, he took ship for New York, followed by Jane and the children some months later.

In 1795, Lovett advertised himself as both a hairdresser and a grocer in the business of Charles McCarty of the City Grocers. Robert was born the following year. In 1799, John purchased Hunter's Hotel at 69 Broadway (which had once been home to New York's Colonial Governor

Robert Hunter), which he renamed Lovett's Hotel. Jane managed the hotel and he ran the taproom. Here Lovett's reputation as a radical reformer stood him in good stead, because his tavern quickly became known as the primary New York assembly place for those who shared anti-Federalist sentiments. Men like Aaron Burr and Edward Livingston, who called themselves "Republicans" frequented his tables, and their political suppers took much the same form as the old London Corresponding Society dinners Lovett had left behind. Here men discussed their views over food and ale, toasted their favorite political candidates, and sang revolutionary and patriotic songs.

In July 1800, Lovett hosted a dinner for Philadelphia newspaper publisher William Duane, an outspoken critic of the "monarchical" presidential administrations of George Washington and John Adams. The Federalist newspaper *Gazette of the United States* heaped scorn on this meeting, saying, "It was originally composed of fools, and subsequently consisted of drunkards. Treasonable sentiments were uttered, blasphemous toasts given, and smutty songs encored." William Duane was an avid supporter of the presidential prospects of Thomas Jefferson, and Lovett's association with him went a long way toward placing Lovett's Hotel at the center of the political "in-crowd" when Jefferson won the presidential election in 1800.

In 1802, Lovett sold his hotel to someone who made it into a museum, a "repository of the valuable productions of nature and ingenuity." Presumably using the profits from this sale, he took a partnership to purchase the Tontine City Hotel at 115 Broadway. Construction on this 80-room brick structure was started in 1794 by the Tontine Association, a group of city investors who hoped to build a number of public buildings for businessmen's use. (They also financed construction of the Tontine Building on Wall Street, which became the city's first stock exchange.) Construction cost overruns on the project forced them to sell at a loss to their builder, Ezra Weeks of the City Builders, and Lovett.

Lovett took out advertisements in the New York and Philadelphia newspapers, announcing the opening of the new City Hotel "where families or individuals may be most handsomely accommodated in a healthy and pleasant part of the City, it being one of the most commodious buildings in the United States, commanding an extensive view, not only of the town, but also of the North and East Rivers, the State of New-Jersey, New York, Long Island, &c."

As before, John Lovett ran the taproom and Jane managed the hotel. This was no mean feat, considering that the structure sported both a men's and ladies' dining room, and featured the city's only banquet hall, which sat 600 people. Four stores occupied the street level on Broadway. The City Hotel stood until 1849, and was the first in New York's distinguished dynasty of world-class luxury hotels. Throughout its lifetime it was the home base of New York's high society, hosting orchestral and operatic concerts, publishing conventions, political, literary and military dinners, and glittering balls.

Parisian Hocquet Caritat opened a library in No. 1 City Hotel in 1803. A catalog of Caritat's titles shows works of fiction, arts and science in English, French, Spanish, Greek and Latin. Caritat served as the New York City agent of the English Press in Paris, which published anti-monarchical, pro-democratic literature by French writers intended for distribution to the English-speaking world. In addition, he translated works of American authors and exported them to France. Seven-year-old Robert must have frequented the Caritat library, where he perhaps learned the democratic ideals, artistic and scientific interests that would later crystallize into his work for the American Institute.

In April 1807, John Lovett composed and signed his will, witnessed by William Jones, Hiram Gardner and Thomas Waring. In it he left one third of his estate to his wife, and the other two thirds to his surviving children. He named his son John and friends Ezra Weeks and Charles McCarty as executors, and his wife Jane as the guardian of his children.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1807 derailed Lovett's ability to operate the City Hotel. His eight-year-old daughter Harriet succumbed in August, followed by his wife in November. Disconsolate, Lovett sold his share in the hotel to celebrated confectioner Chenelette Dusseaussoir, one of the occupants of the ground-floor shops. He realized \$80,000 from the transfer, and promptly began selling and dividing all of his remaining assets among his children.

Late one night in September 1809, 54-year-old John Lovett disappeared from his home. Four days later, his body was found in the East River. James Cheetham's newspaper, *The Republican Watchtower* of September 21, 1809 carried the following story:

It is not without considerable regret that we are obliged to announce the loss of one of our staunch Republican Citizens, in the death of Mr. John Lovett, not long since the respectable occupant of the City Hotel.

As the manner of his death has not yet been explicitly ascertained, we are from notions of delicacy restrained in the statement of all the circumstances for the present, as they will probably be more amply stated hereafter. A handbill, which was published yesterday, offering a reward of One Hundred Dollars for the body of the deceased, relieves us in some measure from the bond of silence we had imposed upon ourselves in regard to this unhappy casualty, since his own family have deemed it proper to make it public.

The information we have received is this – that on Monday night, the 11th inst, he left his own house about 11 o'clock without a hat, and was not missed by the family until next morning; that a strict search has been made for the body, and it was said last evening, that it had been found. The present conjecture is that he had volunteered his own death by precipitating himself into the East River, which lay so convenient to his house. He has left behind him a respectable family. To enter into any investigation of the reasons which might have induced him to commit this act, if he did do so, would not, perhaps, at this time, be either prudent or proper.

Lovett's children interred him on September 16, alongside their mother in the yard of St. Paul's Chapel on Broadway at Fulton Street. This is Manhattan's oldest church: the one George Washington attended when New York briefly served as the U.S. Capitol. The recorder for Trinity Parish, which encompasses historic St. Paul's, relates that there is no existing stone for John or Jane Lovett in the churchyard, but burial records do confirm that the couple lies there.

Siblings

After his father committed suicide, it is likely that Robert lived with his brother John until enlisting in the New York Militia at the outbreak of the War of 1812. All of the Lovett children would have lived comfortably on their inheritance during this period. Robert's obituaries relate that he received a common school education in childhood. He was the seventh of ten children:

1. Jane, born 1785, Wales. Married a Mr. Berry.
2. John, born 1786, Wales. Married Maria Engle, 10 children
3. Thomas, born 1787, Wales. Married Louisa Doubleday, 6 children
4. Charlotte, born 1789, Wales, died young
5. George, born 1791, London. Married Augusta Doubleday, 3 children
6. Mary, born 1793, London, died young
7. Robert, born 1796, New York. Married Anna Doubleday, 10 children
8. Maria, born 1797, New York. Married James Ward
9. Harriet, born 1799, New York, died young
10. Caroline, born 1803, New York. Married James Rile, 5 children

More common in the 19th century than today, is the curious fact that three Lovett brothers married three Doubleday sisters.

Brother Thomas Lovett, like Robert, was a trained engraver. He was listed as a stone seal engraver at 270 Bowery in 1824, the year he died. His widow Louisa continued to operate an engraving shop at 178 Water St. (1825), then 52 Fulton St., (1826), 12 Greene St. (1827-28), and 122 Bleecker St. (1829-30).

Brother George Lovett began his career as a building contractor. An earthmoving commission he received to fill in the Battery earned him so much cash that he was able to invest heavily in real estate and become one of Manhattan's largest landowners. In the 1850s he became a mortgage banker, and was ranked as one of New York's wealthiest citizens.

War of 1812 Service

Robert enlisted in a company stationed in Manhattanville and commanded by a Captain Chatterton. In hopes of creating a barrier across the full breadth of Manhattan Island against an anticipated British invasion from the north, hundreds of private citizens assisted Lovett's unit in the construction of extensive breastworks bounded by Fort Fish and Fort Clinton at McGown's Pass. These fortifications were completed in 1814 but never used. The city of New York eventually grew up around them. Visitors to Central Park at 105th Street may still view some of their remains.

Apprenticeship to Thomas Brown

Robert's military term must have been quite brief, because by September of 1813, he was employed as an apprentice in the celebrated engraving shop of Thomas Brown. In the year 1800, master stone seal engraver Brown operated out of a shop at No. 135 Broadway, just a few doors down from the City Hotel at No. 115. Over the years, Brown advertised "coats of Arms, Crests, Cyphers, Emblematical Subjects &c, engraved on stone, Diamonds, Amethysts, Topazes, Crystals, &c., both in the rough, or cut to any form. Ladies' Seals, Pencil Cases, and Signet Rings engraved with Coats of Arms, Crests, names, or any device. Coats of Arms painted and forwarded to any parts of the United States. Books of Heraldry with upwards of 100,000 names. Coats of Arms found." Brown's business is listed in various New York business registers until 1842.

In 1813, Brown cut the seal on a gold signet ring for U.S. Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin, and this may be the very seal Gallatin placed beside his name in signing the Treaty of Ghent the following year. A September 27, 1813 invoice for it, marked "paid" and signed by Robert Lovett, indicates that Robert, by age 17, had gained enough of his employer's trust to be permitted to handle his money. In 1816, Robert's training was evidently completed, because he moved to Philadelphia at this time.

Marriage

Sometime in 1814, Robert married Anna Doubleday, daughter of Eleanor Fisher and John Doubleday of London. Anna had emigrated to the U.S. as an infant in 1796. Robert's obituary states that he and Anna were together nearly 60 years, meaning they were married when both were around age 18.

Move to Philadelphia

According to the NYHS *Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860*, Robert Lovett opened his Philadelphia shop in 1816. He may have relocated in order to avoid competing for the same New York clientele as his brother Thomas and teacher, Thomas Brown, or perhaps because he saw the possibility for some future opportunity with the U.S. Mint. According to Stauffer, *American Engravers on Copper and Steel*, Robert advertised himself as an engraver of metal and stone, principally engaged in engraving seals and dies (*Poulson's Advertiser*, 1816-1822 inclusive).

Renown as a Seal Engraver

Robert's obituary writer describes his seal and armorial engravings as "gems of art [that] could not be excelled on either side of the water." In a January 7, 1875 letter, Lewis Glover, Rector of St. Stephen's church in Milburn, New Jersey, wrote, "from time to time my recollection [of Robert], though indistinct, has been agreeably renewed in the admiration of his exquisite and artistic seal and armorial engravings, unsurpassed, so far as my judgment goes, by anything of the kind that has ever come under my observation."

Robert Lovett owned a large collection of books on heraldry and family arms likely used to help New York families identify the proper symbols to employ on their personal seals, or to suggest themes for the design of new family emblems. One of these books, the beautifully illustrated 1851 *Hand Book of Heraldry* by T. Gwilt Mapleson, bears Robert Lovett's signature on the inner leaf, as well as the signature of his son Robert Jr., who inherited his father's entire library.

Finding examples of Robert Sr.'s seal output is difficult, because letter seals were intended as their owner's identifying marks and naturally no maker's mark could be applied to them. Assortments of seals and wax seal impressions from the period in which Robert worked abound in museum collections, but they are seldom attributed to a particular artist. This writer knows of two documented examples of Robert's seal engraving. The first is a personal seal, an impression of which resides at the New York Historical Society in a circular wooden box with a screw-on lid labeled "R. Lovett, Seal Engraver and Die Sinker, 183 Broadway, New York". It bears the Latin inscription "Rectitudine Sto" on a banner surrounding a shield.

The second is the official seal of the University of Virginia, furnished to the order of Thomas Jefferson. The official seal of a university was applied to all of its documentation, correspondence, and library holdings, and its symbolic content was carefully chosen. Excerpts from a series of 1819 letters between Jefferson and his friend Thomas Cooper illustrate how the image for the Seal of the University of Virginia was selected:

Jefferson, Monticello, to Cooper, Philadelphia. April 2, 1819: "...I return to the other resolution... a device for the college seal, of which I must request you to procure the execution. A seal with a wooden handle is wanted. It will be so little used that I believe a metal one will be sufficient, and if of silver, it will be less liable to rust than iron or steel. If you will engage such a one from one of your best artists, & inform me what the price will be, I will take care to have the money placed in Philadelphia for payment on delivery. I have no book to refer to for the figure of Minerva in her robes of the arts of peace, but I am in hopes the libraries of Philadelphia will furnish you one."

Cooper, Philadelphia, to Jefferson, Monticello. April 15, 1819: "...As to the seal, I must wait till I can.... procure a classic drawing of the Peplon. The Peace Minerva, I believe has wings to her helmet. I know of no emblems of the arts of peace but the astronomical gnomon and the sphere, both of which we know were the instruments of the antients. You have said nothing about the size. I shall get it made as small as is consistent with distinctness in the figure and the reading. I fear I cannot promise much excellence in the execution, but if I get a drawing made first it can be copied. I shall hunt through such authorities as I can find here for the Minerva."

Cooper, Philadelphia, to Jefferson, Monticello. June 21, 1819: "...I have had much trouble in fixing on a Minerva. None to be found in Tooke, Spence, or any French Pantheon or authority. I examined Monfaucon, but I could find none worthy of being copied. I found the Minerva of Vellatin in the Museum Napoleon, but one arm is hidden, and the anatomy is not correct. I took the Minerva of Vellatin as a standard, but I do not like either his drawings or his alterations. I then looked over the Record des Sculptures, and all the medallion seals in our Academy of Arts. I fixed at length upon the design of one which I got Mr. Sully [portrait painter Thomas Sully] to draw for me. It is the largest. Vaughan sent the recommended one to Mr. Rasch [silversmith Anthony Rasch] to get it engraved, at a cost of 50 dollars. A young man to whom I applied [Robert Lovett], will engrave it for 15 or 20. I send you an impression of one of his engravings for which he charges 15 dollars. Send back to me such as you prefer, or suggest to me any alterations."

Jefferson, Monticello, to Cooper, Philadelphia, July 11, 1819: "...I have exhibited different designs for our seal to such friends as had a taste for such things. We all found the attitude of Minerva in one of Mr. Otis' [portrait painter Bass Otis] designs as being more beautiful, but not the shield and spear. The emblems of another of his figures, the olive branch & cornucopia, peace and plenty, are more conformable to the idea expressed.... One of my granddaughters [Virginia Randolph] has made a sketch uniting the attitude & the emblems preferred, however take the one you like best with such alterations as yourself would approve and commit the work to the cheaper artist you mention."

Robert Lovett was identified as the engraver of this seal in Jefferson's April 9, 1820 letter to John Vaughan of Philadelphia. Vaughan, the librarian and secretary of the American Philosophical Society, was planning a trip to Charlottesville and Jefferson wrote him to inquire about the University seal, for which he was still waiting: "...Dr. Cooper was so kind the last autumn as to get a seal engraved for our University by Mr. Robert Lovett, engraver of Philadelphia, for which payment was made, but no opportunity of sending it to us occurred before he left Philadelphia...."

Children

In Philadelphia, Robert and Anna saw the births of six of their ten children:

Robert, Jr., born July 30, 1818.

George, birth date unknown, died in infancy

John Doubleday, born 1819
 Thomas L., born 1820
 Anna, birth date unknown
 Maria Augusta, birth date unknown
 George Hampden, born 1824

Return to New York City

The death of his brother Thomas may have prompted Robert's return to New York in 1824; possibly Robert wished to assist Thomas' widow Louisa Doubleday in completing his brother's unfinished business. Robert Lovett's New York addresses, listed in Huttner, and Rulau, *Standard Catalog of United States Tokens, 1700-1900*, were as follows:

Home: 414 Broome until 1827	Shop: 249 Broadway 1824
63 Church in 1828	259 Broadway 1825
362 Hudson in 1834	279 Broadway 1829
43 2nd Ave. in 1835	297 Broadway 1830 (poss transp.?)
183 Broadway in 1836	8 Grove St. 1831
248 Orange 1838	362 Hudson, 1832
4 Grove St. 1839-74	67 Maiden Lane 1833
	5 Dey St. 1850-55

Presumably the continuing addition of children to Robert's family necessitated the various home relocations. Third and fourth daughters Emma and Cornelia were born in New York, as was the fifth daughter and tenth child, Matilda, who arrived in 1835. The expansion of the Lovett engraving establishment may have had an impact, as one by one, sons John D., Thomas L., and George H. set themselves up in engraving shops around the city. In addition, the city may have renumbered Broadway addresses on several occasions. Robert and his family were members of St. Luke's Episcopal Parish. The church was on Hudson St., very close to their home on Grove St.

The New York City Trade

Five different advertisements in the *New York American* in 1828 have Robert Lovett repairing watches and selling mechanical pencils, watches, jewelry, walking canes, portable writing desks, and heraldic seals. Like Thomas Brown, he also imported books on heraldry. In 1830, Robert entered wax impressions of stone seal engravings at the third annual fair of the American Institute, and won a premium for them. Many well-known Hard Times token, temperance, Masonic, and other medallic issues of Lovett's shop can be identified by the signature, "R. Lovett, NY."

Politics and Fraternal affiliations

During the Hard Times Tokens period (1832-1844), Robert held a decidedly anti-bank stance, and this could be the reason he issued political tokens espousing his views. He was listed as a member of an organization "opposed to paper money and banking, and to all licensed monopolies". In the May 12, 1834 issue of *The Man*, his name was published in a list of "mechanics and other working men" who pledged themselves to endorse a Jacksonian platform of "Hickory, Homespun, and Hard Money". They opposed all bank chartering, and hoped to work toward the passage of a law "abolishing, gradually, all bills of banks now existing under twenty dollars." His name appeared on this list weekly, and eventually his group put forward a candidate for City Council who ran for, and obtained a seat, on the anti-bank ticket: John Lovett. (This couldn't be Robert's son John D. Lovett the engraver, because he was only 15 years old in 1834. It likely was his brother John, who eventually left New York to settle in Union County, New Jersey.)

In the 1830s, Robert founded a group called the Knights of the Round Table, an organization dedicated to the support of firemen, "who were so popularly recognized in the lower part of New York as to render their organization one of great prominence and on several occasions, the subject of interesting biographical and historic comment." A reference to this group in the

Brooklyn Eagle mentions an 1864 annual dinner dance held at No. 306 Grand St., with “fancy dresses, good music, gay attire and festive edibles.”

The American Institute

The 1840s saw Robert’s rise to prominence as a member, manager and Vice President of the American Institute of the City of New York. Chartered in 1829, the American Institute’s original membership consisted of eighty of New York’s leading academics, merchants, mechanics and artists, all of whom shared a single goal: to encourage and promote domestic industry. Believing that the United States’ world stature was diminished by its reliance on foreign imports, these men wished to stimulate America’s artists, mechanics, farmers, inventors and tradesmen to work together toward the goal of national self-sufficiency. They announced their plan to host annual expositions of American achievement, during which they would bestow financial and medallic rewards upon the best entries in four categories: agriculture, commerce, manufacturing and the arts.

The first modest fair of the Institute in 1828 was held at the Masonic Hall on Lower Broadway. Over the years, the fairs grew with the population of the city and the inclusion of more categories and exhibitors from around the country. By the latter half of the 19th century, as many as 200,000 people attended each year’s fair. Held at New York’s biggest, most architecturally spectacular public venues, these gargantuan productions lasted as long as six weeks. In the 1830s, the agricultural shows had to be moved to separate locations in New Jersey and Long Island. The need for bigger and better exposition halls led the Institute to rent out first Niblo’s Garden (1836-1845), then Castle Garden (1846-1854), the Crystal Palace (1855-1858), and the 14th St. Armory (1859-1867). In the 1870s, the Institute tired of its tenant role and purchased a permanent home big enough for its offices, year-round lending library and the fairs: the former Empire City Skating Rink, which occupied an entire city block on Third Avenue at 63rd Street.

Every Institute fair featured a wonderful juxtaposition of fine art and heavy machinery. Visitors strolled through great halls adorned with marble and bronze sculptures, paintings and tapestries, past standing displays of steam engines, suction pumps, rock crushers and automatic knitting machines. Lectures on engineering, art and science by the brightest citizens of the day went on continuously in audience rooms off the main corridors. On opening day, a renowned keynote speaker congratulated Americans on their achievements, called for future advances, and spelled out some new area of study the Institute wished to encourage. The medal awards ceremonies on the final evening featured orchestral performances, parade drills and plenty of pomp and circumstance.

Robert Lovett’s first experience with fair administration came in 1838, when he was invited to serve as a judge of engraving by Charles C. Wright, who was the chief judge of Fine Arts that year and who had been the Institute’s medal die-sinker since 1830. In 1840, Robert took the post of chief judge of the Dies and Engravings category, and furnished the report of winners he had chosen with fellow judges Freeman Randon and George W. Tenbair. Overall, there were 1400 entries to the 1840 fair, and the premium committees awarded a total of 10 gold and 50 silver medals, 12 silver cups, and 331 diplomas that year.

At the close of the fair in October 1840, a scandal involving the medals awarded in 1831 for specimens in dentistry erupted in the newspapers. Critics alleged that second and third-premium winners were paying the Institute to strike their medals in gold. An official investigation ensued, and four Institute officers resigned their posts, even though the investigators finally determined the charges to be groundless. This shakeup prompted C.C. Wright’s resignation (though he was not implicated in the scandal), leaving the die-sinking position open. The Lovett family took over the work in 1841, and retained it until 1893. Robert Lovett stepped up to fill the empty post of Vice President of the Institute, and took on a busy managerial role. His sons John D., Thomas L. and George H. were working in his die-sinking shop by then, and presumably they absorbed enough of his engraving work to free up his time for fair management.

The American Institute was an all-volunteer organization. In any given year, some twenty-odd managers divided up the diverse duties of running the fair, but even with such a large staff, the work required a full-time commitment during the fairs, and regular year-round attendance at

monthly Institute planning meetings. A review of Institute records for 1841 shows that Robert took an active role, showing up for almost every meeting, though many others did not. In 1841 he was on the jewelry, engraving and die-sinking committee as well as the committee on steam power. His duties were to set up the display areas allotted for these exhibits, supervise them during the course of the fair, and coordinate the exhibit registration for these categories. In addition, Robert was in charge of coordinating the judging of gentlemen's boots and shoes, ladies boots and shoes, and paper hanging and upholstery. He also served on the committee on premiums and the agricultural committee on premiums. Premium committee members arranged for the striking of medals and payment of premiums, and had the honor of presenting the awards at the closing ceremonies of each fair. Robert Lovett continued to serve the American Institute as a Vice President at least through 1855. His son George took over the medal striking work around 1851.

A Probate Battle

In January 1864, Robert's wealthy mortgage-banker brother George passed away, and his will named Robert as his executor. George's real property was worth \$800,000 and his annual income was \$120,000 at the time of his death. His two married daughters, Mary Kingsland and Augusta Gillender, fought bitterly over the terms of their father's will, placing Uncle Robert in the middle of their feud. The New York Court of Appeals finally decided the case in September 1866. Robert received only a small bequest of \$10,000, but his nieces' bitterness towards him persisted until his death. This fact is perplexing, since both women had fabulously wealthy husbands. Ambrose Kingsland, who had been Mayor of New York in 1850, was in the sperm oil trade and owned several shipping lines. Real estate developer Eccles Gillender held the mortgages for prime parcels of land and major buildings all over the city.

Death

On December 30, 1874, Anna Doubleday Lovett, Robert's wife of 60 years, passed away. Six hours later on December 31, Robert followed her. They were buried together in the family plot in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn on January 4, 1875. Eventually, 19 other Lovett individuals would join them in the Green-Wood family plot.

Obituaries and Remembrances

Death notice in *New York Herald*.

Obituary in *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

Letter to Editor of *New York Herald* by John Lomas of Brooklyn NY, giving tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lovett, Sr.

Letter answering John Lomas from Lewis P. Glover, Rector of St. Stephen's Church, Milburn, NJ, regarding his childhood recollections of Robert Lovett, Sr. and his opinion of his engraving work.

All of the above with dates clipped away, pasted in a remembrance album compiled by Robert's youngest daughter, Matilda.

Unanswered Questions

Was Robert Lovett a Mason? (Many Masonic medals were issued by him and his sons.)

Was he a teetotaler? (Many temperance medals were issued from his shop.)

Birth year extrapolated from Jane's age (47) stated in her 1807 obituary in the *New York Evening Post*. Burial records of St. Paul's Church, Trinity Parish, New York City, confirm this birth year.
P. 5.

General information about the LCS taken from Mary Thale, Ed., *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983.

Mary Thale, Ed., *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854)*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 180.

General information on the trials taken from Alan Wharam, *The Treason Trials of 1794*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1992, and Thomas Bayley Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason...from the Earliest Period to the Present (1828)*, Vol. XXIV, "Trial of Thomas Hardy, Trial of John Horne Tooke, Trial of John Thelwall", 35 George III.

"Examination of Lovett, May 16, 1794," in *Registers of the Privy Council*, No. 33, George III 94. *Thale*, p. 101.

Autobiography of Francis Place, pp. 187-8, 198-9, cited in *Thale*, p. 451.

George Gates Raddin, *An Early New York Library of Fiction*, H.W. Wilson & Co., New York, 1940.

The joint entry for Louisa/Thomas is under "copperplate printer" in Huttner & Huttner.

Lovett's War of 1812 Pension papers, provided by Charles McSorley.

McKay's *Register of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers, etc. of New York City, 1633-1820*, p. 14.

Undated newspaper clipping provided by Charles McSorley.

Signed receipt in the collection of Charles McSorley.

In the collection of Katherine Jaeger.

Archives of the University of Virginia, Jefferson Papers online.

New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, Vol. 6 # 2, April 1875, p. 112.

Ethan Robey, doctoral research, Columbia, communicated in an 8-26-04 email to Katherine Jaeger. ("Letter to the Editor", *New York Herald*, Jan. 3, 1875, by John Lomas.)



Robert Lovett Sr.

Anna Doubleday Lovett

Matching miniature portraits, oil on ivory, in blackwood frames trimmed in brass, with glass covering the portraits. Portrait ovals measure 3" high x 2-1/2" wide. Frames measure 5-1/2" high by 4-7/8" wide. Artist, though clearly a highly skilled miniature portraitist likely graduated from the National Academy of Design, is unidentified. Painted between 1824-1840. Portraits assessment provided by Dr. William Gerdt, Professor Emeritus of CUNY Graduate Center and Carrie Rebora Barrett, American Paintings Curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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